

REMARKS

In the aforesaid final Office Action, claims 24-31 were rejected under 35 USC §251, claims 1, 25-28, 30 and 31 were rejected under 35 USC 102(e) as being clearly anticipated by Hernandez (U.S. Patent No. 5,269,759), claims 28 and 31 were rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Groshong (U.S. Patent No 4,431,26), claims 25, 28, 30 and 31 were rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Polin (U.S. Patent No 3,828,782), claims 25, 28, 30 and 31 were rejected under 35 USC §102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Alexander (U.S. Patent No 4,004,588), claim 3 was rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Hernandez '759 alone, and claims 24 and 29 were rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Alexander '588 alone. Applicants note with appreciation the indication that claims 6-23 are allowed and claims 2, 4 and 5 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Claims 1, 3-23 and 32 are pending (new claim 32 being added by this amendment).

The Examiner did not enter Applicants' after final amendment filed July 18, 2003.

Applicants have cancelled claims 2 and 24-31.

Applicants have amended claim 1 to include the limitations of allowed claim 2 (i.e., claim 2 into claim 1), except that Applicants have changed the phrase "inflatable dilatation balloon" to "inflatable balloon", and have changed "means to releasably interconnect the distal end of the proximal shaft section and the proximal end of the distal shaft section" to "the distal end of the proximal shaft section being releasably connected to the proximal end of the distal shaft section". Support for the amendment can be found

in original claim 11 as filed and in original claim 16 as filed (i.e., as filed in USSN 08/250,785 which issued as US Patent No. 5,498,240 patent). Applicants have similarly amended claims 12 and 13 to replace the term "means".

Applicants have amended claims 3 and 5 to correct antecedent basis errors in the claims.


Applicants have added new claim 32 which corresponds to claim 12, except that Applicants have changed "replaceable distal shaft section" to "distal shaft section", and have replaced d) through g) with the requirement of "disengaging the proximal shaft section from the distal shaft section", and have replaced the term "means" as discussed above in relation to the amendment to claim 1. Support for the amendment can be found at least at column 5, line 50 of the 5,498,240 patent.

In light of the above amendments and remarks, applicants respectfully request that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

FULWIDER PATTON LEE & UTECHT, LLP

By:


Gunther O. Hanke
Registration No. 32,989

GOH/PMM/psm

Howard Hughes Center
6060 Center Drive, Tenth Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90045
Telephone: (310) 824-5555
Facsimile: (310) 824-9696